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ABSTRACT

Successful principals of urban schools are able to understand the interactions between the city school and its environment and are able to take advantage of the array of urban resources, buffer the school and its students from some negative environmental influences, and provide services that help offset negative factors. Against a backdrop of ambivalence, the urban principal must recognize the size, population density, diversity, and technological development that characterize the urban environment. The task of the urban principal is to recognize the factors of the urban context that have impacts on student outcomes. A framework is presented that accounts for the influences of home and family, school, and the community on the urban student. The interactivist principal is able to anticipate trends and to understand and shape the future by regulating interchanges between the school and its context. Students must be at the center of the principal's consideration as he or she attempts to use urban resources to the maximum while insulating the school and students from negative factors. (Contains 1 figure and 136 references.) (SLD)

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Understanding the Urban Context and Conditions of Practice of School Administration

by R. M. Englert

The National Center on Education in the Inner Cities

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Understanding the Urban Context and Conditions of Practice of School Administration

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Understanding the Urban Context and Conditions of Practice of School Administration

RICHARD M. ENGLERT

The city school interacts continuously with its urban environment. Some principals—the most successful ones—understand this interaction and thus are able to take full advantage of a vast array of urban resources, buffer the school and its students from some of the negative environmental influences, and provide educational and other services that help to offset these factors placing students at risk. Other, less successful principals are virtually immobilized by the seemingly overwhelming forces of city life and thus are unable to combat, let alone influence, the myriad of dysfunctional and pathological pressures on the school and its students.

Ackoff (1974) described four types of planners confronting a changing environment. These same types could easily be applied to the role of urban school principal. The *inactive* principal does nothing with respect to the future, either not recognizing external threats or hoping they simply will go away. The *reactive* principal yearns for the "good old days" when things were allegedly better and tries to resist change and return things to some prior ideal state. The *preactive* principal attempts to anticipate trends and prepare for the most probable future. The *interactive* principal not merely anticipates trends but tries to un-

derstand and create the future by a continuous interchange between the school, its context, and a range of possible futures.

An interactive approach to school management and leadership is asserted here. The effective principal understands the urban context in order to create productive interchanges that will tap environmental resources of potential benefit to the school, insulate to some extent the school against unwanted forces, provide services and supports that can help compensate for unalterable negative influences that place students and the school at risk of failure, and generally manipulate those alterable variables at the school's disposal. An adequate understanding of the urban context is a necessary component of the knowledge base of the interactive principal who wishes to take positive action for school success.

This chapter proceeds in five stages. After the introduction, the general nature of the urban context is addressed, including the traditional ambivalence our society (including educational leaders) has toward our urban schools and several salient features of the urban context of schools. Then, the focus is on a model for understanding the urban influences on student learning. Its starting point is a conceptualization, developed by the late Paula Silver, involving the conditions and problems of practice that a principal needs to confront as a practicing professional. The emphasis is on the student as the key referent point for a professional's attention. Next, the major ways in which the urban environment affects the key actors and features of the school and of learning are presented. This discussion is based on a framework that asserts that the family, school, and community are in an interactive relationship that directly and indirectly affects student outcomes. Finally, the more important implications this interaction between the school and its environment has for the school principal are reviewed, followed by some unanswered questions and a few concluding remarks. Throughout the chapter, a conscious effort is made to reference a substantial portion of the literature on the school in the urban context; this literature is an invaluable resource for the continuing professional development of the city principal.

The Urban Context

Ambivalence About City Schools

The literature on schools in big cities is ambivalent. On the negative side, the problems seem insurmountable, and big city schools are

viewed as failures in their central functions. City-school students achieve at lower levels than nonurban students (Wolf, 1978). Urban schools have been criticized for being too large, very impersonal, and unconnected to the outside, and for having poorly motivated students, low expectations, terrible attendance patterns, and unsupportive environments (Maeroff, 1988). In the 1960s, the condition of the city schools was depicted as failing (Herndon, 1965; Kohl, 1967; Kozol, 1967). Faced with seemingly hopeless situations, some came to the same conclusion as Halpin (1966) when he wrote:

> The conditions in some of our schools are so bad, and the physical and social environments in which these schools are located are so frightful, that we may have to cross off some of these schools as expendable. This is a shocking statement, I know, but I think that we had better face it. (p. 235)

Yet even more shocking is the observation that city schools have worsened considerably *since* the 1960s (Hill, Wise & Shapiro, 1989; Kasarda, 1989; Wacquant & Wilson, 1989; Kozol, 1991). The prognosis is particularly poor because new teachers hired to teach in urban schools over the next few years actually would prefer suburban schools and are not adequately prepared for the urban context (Grant, 1989). Some big-city school districts have dropout rates in the neighborhood of 40% to 60%, with some schools exceeding 75% to 80% (Hahn, Danzberger & Lefkowitz, 1987). And city-school students score on average below suburban students on standardized tests (Ornstein & Levine, 1989). These problems provoked Maeroff (1988) to observe that "no white suburb in America would long tolerate the low academic achievement taken for granted in urban high schools attended largely by blacks and hispanics" (p. 633).

In spite of such widespread perceptions, the reform movement that was signaled by the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) and that continued through the mid-1980s was judged by some experts to be largely irrelevant to urban schools (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1988) and lacking "the voice of urban America" (Council of the Great City Schools, 1987).

At the same time, the literature also paints a *positive* picture of urban schools. Edmonds (1979; 1982) emphasized that there are effec-

tive schools in urban areas and that these schools have identifiable characteristics. Urban schools have long been considered pioneers of educational reform and have implemented numerous models of successful programs (Council of the Great City Schools, 1987; 1988). Empirical studies indicate that urban school systems and individual schools can be successfully reformed provided certain factors are addressed (Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer& Wisenbaker, 1977; Clark, Lotto & McCarthy, 1980; Hill, Wise & Shapiro, 1989; Purkey & Smith, 1983; 1985). And city schools can draw on a multiplicity of resources in their urban environments (Hill, Wise & Shapiro, 1989).

Too often, in spite of the problems city schools have, critics neglect to notice the great achievements that our city schools have wrought. For example, Ravitch (1974) painted an impressive portrait of the New York City school system when she wrote:

> Critics of the public schools in each generation have emphasized failure and inefficiency. What is inevitably lost sight of is the monumental accomplishments of the public school system of New York City. It has provided free, unlimited educational opportunities for millions, regardless of language, race, class, or religion. It has pioneered in the creation of programs for children with special gifts or special handicaps. It has willingly accepted the responsibility for solving problems which were national in scope, the result of major demographic shifts. The descendants of the miserably poor European immigrants who overflowed the city schools in the nineteenth and early twentieth century are today the prosperous middle class of the city and its suburbs. Without the public schools, despite their obvious faults, this unprecedented social and economic mobility would be inconceivable. (p. 403)

Similarly, Chase (1978), who conducted a study of urban schools, summarized the positive approach to urban schools as follows:

> Urban education has an inner vitality which is generating innovative programs of great potential even in the midst of extremely adverse conditions. Despite well-documented testimony on the low achievement in urban schools and recent statistics purporting to show the schools as the most dangerous

> place to be, we are discovering many administrators, teachers, and other staff members who are demonstrating ability to rouse zest for learning in students from diverse backgrounds, including those whose histories have been marked by failure, loss of hope, and/or antisocial behaviors. (pp. 35-36)

In short, the literature amply supports both the negative and the positive aspects of schools in the cities. In fact, the considerable literature on different aspects of urban education probably signals what Wacquant and Wilson (1989) called the ghetto's "stunning comeback into the collective consciousness of America" (p.9). In line with this awakening consciousness and in recognition that early reform did not adequately deal with the problems of education in the cities, a spate of national reports emerged in the late 1980s that addressed the unique problems of city schools along with a number of proposals for action. In 1990, Lytle provided a comprehensive review of these reports, along with a comment and analysis of their context. His overall conclusion, however, is that "the prospects for significant improvement seem bleak" (p. 219). He goes on to state that these reports "lack the sense of outrage that their student constituents deserve" (p. 219).

Against this backdrop of ambivalent views in the face of very real urban problems, the principal is called on to serve as the designated school leader. If the urban principal is to be effective, she or he needs to go beyond simplistic stereotypes of the city and to understand the various facets of urban life, of which the school is an integral part.

Salient Features of the Urban Context

Gordon (1982) correctly noted that many people have the mistaken notion that *urban* issues are nothing more than the problems associated with ethnic, racial, and low-socioeconomic minorities. Such a view has the connotation of placing the blame for urban problems on the shoulders of those who are modern society's greatest victims. This view also is simplistic, grossly overlooking the fundamental complexities that underlie the modern city.

According to Gordon (1982), urbanization involves a set of interactive characteristics. As he wrote:

> Urban areas are characterized by large numbers of people, by high densities, by great diversity and heterogeneity of characteristics and concerns of people; by high degrees of mobility, a relatively high incidence of anonymity; by conflicting lifestyles in close proximity; by cultural richness; by a concentration of material resources; by ease of communication and geographic mobility; and by the coexistence of fluidity and rigidity in institutional and personal behavior. (p. 1973)

At the core of these characteristics are size, density, diversity, and technological development permitting mobility of transportation and rapid communications. Because cities are big and densely populated, a variety of interests are in constant contact and competition. Highly bureaucratic institutions are necessary to maintain a certain level of stability and control, yet those bureaucracies create a rigidity that conflicts with the rich diversity inherent in cities. Simultaneously, cities provide both a rich, stimulating environment and the potential for "isolation, deprivation and overstimulation," what Gordon (1982) refers to as a "developmental paradox of contradiction" (p. 1974).

The urban context thus has a direct effect on the individuals who are a large city's inhabitants. Fantini and Weinstein (1968) conceptualized the central features of cities in terms of three structural factors interacting with three psychological variables. Since cities have large, high-density populations, an individual necessarily forms many impersonal relationships. Ultimately, there is a tendency for vast size and density to result in a loss of personal identity as each individual becomes just another face in the crowd. At the same time, large cities are very complex and require immense bureaucracies. Bureaucratic complexity often causes an individual to feel a loss of control over his or her own identity, resulting in a sense of individual powerlessness. Also, diversity, which Fantini and Weinstein called "one of the most unique aspects of an urban environment" (1968, p. 9), leads to an individual's loss of affiliation with like-minded people and a sense of disconnectedness from a homogeneous group. According to Fantini and Weinstein, the essential characteristics of the city (namely, size/density, bureaucratic complexity, and diversity) are "social realities which persistently lay stress on the individual's concern for identity, power, and connectedness" (p. 10). To the extent that these social realities are extreme and dysfunctional, they force the individual to feel worthless, powerless, and unconnected.

Fantini and Weinstein's discussion of social realities does not go far enough in depicting some other salient features of the urban environment. Moreover, the depiction above only emphasizes the negative corollaries of the characteristics of cities. There are also positive ones that an interactive principal needs to understand. Consequently, some additional variables that have significance for the urban school deserve attention.

For example, population size, density, and diversity also mean that there is a greater tolerance for atypical behavior, a greater richness of different cultures, and greater opportunity to build powerful coalitions of like-minded interests. Similarly, bureaucratization and specialization imply that rule-driven systems exist that, if one knows the appropriate codes, can be unlocked and accessed in predictable ways.

Political variables also merit scrutiny. Invariably, a city has many essential relations with other political jurisdictions. There is competition for power and resources between a city and its surrounding suburbs as well as attempts by a city to exercise autonomy vis-á-vis state control. Population density gives a city concentrations of votes in state and national elections as well as concentrations of legislators in state and national legislatures. These power blocs can further the aims of the city in other arenas. At the same time, city unity is splintered by a proliferation of interest groups, each with the power to veto but few with the power to enact and implement a proposal alone. Also, suburban and rural coalitions at the state level often form to produce an anti-urban sentiment in many states.

In addition, a city has socioeconomic systems that provide a broad economic base and a wide range of goods, services, resources, and opportunities. At the same time, loss of industry and jobs to competing suburbs and regions, loss of the middle class to suburbs, an older and eroding infrastructure, greater cost of services, concentration of an underclass, social/ethnic segregation, and a concentration of pathologies (drugs, crime, gangs) create a continuous need for intervention and social change.

The works of Gordon (1982) and Fantini and Weinstein (1968) as well as the listing of additional variables above identify very well the most significant *theoretical* features of the urban context of schools. Two other features of American cities derive from the *historical* development of urban areas: (1) a heavy concentration of minority populations, especially African Americans and Latinos, in our cities and (2) the

extreme concentration of poverty in our inner cities. Each historical development greatly influences our urban schools.

One of the major migration patterns of 20th century America was the movement of many African Americans from the rural South into the cities (Lemann, 1986). In addition, more recently, Latinos have been migrating into urban areas in increasing numbers (Wilson, 1987). As a result, 40% of all African Americans in the United States are concentrated in 11 central cities, and 77% of all African Americans live in urban areas (Action Council on Minority Education, 1990). Similarly, Latino populations inhabit urban areas in large numbers. For example, more than 50% of all Mexican Americans live in the five largest metropolitan areas, thereby making them "more urbanized than any other major demographic group" (Hill, 1990, p. 399). Moreover, such concentrations could be expected to intensify. Fertility rates vary widely by populations subgroup. Hodgkinson (1988) reported:

> Generally, in order for a population to be stable, women must produce 2.1 children each, 2 to replace mom and dad and .1 to cover infant mortality. Currently, in the U.S., Mexican-Americans produce 2.9 children per female; blacks, 2.4; Puerto Ricans, 2.1; whites, 1.7; Cubans, 1.3. (p. 11)

The overall growth rate of Mexican Americans to the year 2000 is projected to be 46% and that of African Americans is projected to be 23%, in comparison with a 7% increase for white Americans (Hill, 1990).

This growing diversity is also evident in national immigration rates. Whereas the 1920s witnessed the immigration of about 14 million people almost exclusively from Europe, the 1980s had over 14 million immigrants with 80% of them originating in South America and Asia (Hodgkinson, 1988). Since cities are the major portals through which immigrants enter the United States, the implications of diverse cultures and languages and changing neighborhoods are enormous for schools.

One additional demographic factor is relevant: the age of our population. Overall, our population is rapidly aging. Hodgkinson (1988) reported:

> In 1983, we crossed a major watershed; we had, for the first time, more people over 65 than we had teenagers. This will be true as long as you live. The consequences for education will be momen-

> tous. Dependent youth need expensive educational services; dependent elderly need expensive medical services. (p.12)

Since the average white American is about 24% older than the average African American and about 40% older than the average Latino American, the age distribution varies by population subgroup. An aging white population in need of medical support will compete for scarce dollars and political support with a younger minority population, much of it concentrated in the cities. Moreover, the city-based minority population is also heavily poor.

Over the past 30 years, American cities have experienced a growing concentration of poverty and an increasing isolation of central-city concentrations from the mainstream of society. The period from 1970 to 1980 especially witnessed a severe decline. For example, as Wilson (1987) demonstrated:

> Although the total population in [the] five largest cities decreased by 9 percent between 1970 and 1980, the poverty population increased by 22 percent. . . . Furthermore, the population living in poverty areas grew by 40 percent overall, by 69 percent in high poverty areas and by a staggering 161 percent in extreme poverty areas. . . . (p. 46)

Also, urban minorities have been especially affected adversely by structural changes in the economy in the past two decades (Wilson, 1987). A study by Ricketts and Sawhill (1986) emphasized the economic plight of urban areas. They analyzed U.S. census tracts to determine which had large concentrations of dropouts, welfare recipients, female heads of households, unemployed males, and incomes below the poverty line. They identified 880 census tracts that simultaneously had high levels of the first four variables, 874 of which had average income levels below the established poverty line. Of the 880 tracts, which they termed "underclass" areas, 99% of them were located in urban areas. Within these census tracts, African Americans made up 58% of the population, white Americans 28%, and Latino Americans 11%. An alarming 36% of the population of these 880 tracts was made up of children (Schorr & Schorr, 1988).

This study by Ricketts and Sawhill exemplifies a critical feature of the inner city: the concentration of factors related to poverty, especially

for some minorities. Wilson (1987) emphasized the importance of the concentration effects within our cities:

> If I had to use one term to capture the differences in the experiences of low-income families who live in inner-city areas from the experiences of those who live in other areas in the central city today, that term would be *concentration effects*. The social transformation of the inner city has resulted in a disproportionate concentration of the most disadvantaged segments of the urban black population creating a social milieu significantly different from the environment that existed in these communities several decades ago. (p. 58)

Economic decline has had its severest effects on African Americans, who are disproportionately represented among our innercity poor. More and more, poor African Americans are "becoming increasingly concentrated in dilapidated territorial enclaves that epitomize acute social and economic marginalization" (Wacquant & Wilson, 1989, p. 9). Intense concentration has led to another key feature of U.S. inner-city life: social isolation. Inner-city residents have become more and more isolated socially from the mainstream. In the context of high rates of joblessness and economic deterioration of the central cities, the result is a "hyperghettoization" in which concentrations of poverty and extreme social isolation emerge as stable working and middle classes (which would normally serve as buffers in the midst of economic downturns) have largely disappeared (Wacquant & Wilson, 1989). Without the buffers of the working and middle classes, the residents of extreme poverty areas have a lower volume of social capital available. Therefore, "today's ghetto residents face a closed opportunity structure" (Wacquant & Wilson, 1989, p. 10). Moreover, structural changes in the economy of the city lead to a reduction in the number of lower-skilled and blue-collar jobs, an exodus of white middle-class residents from the city, and a disappearance of the neighborhood business establishments serving those departing residents. Such factors lead in turn to a further weakening of the city economy and an exacerbation of the problems of those who are economically deprived in the city.

By way of summary, a number of salient features of the urban context have been highlighted in the literature. A principal who wishes to understand that context should start with a knowledge of these

underlying features. This is only the beginning, however. A full understanding needs to extend into how these features and the entire context affect the mission and day-to-day workings of the school, including the effects on the students the schools serve.

Understanding the Context

Focus on Students

An understanding of the urban context is actually a subset of the entire knowledge base a school administrator needs to have in order to operate effectively and efficiently. Traditionally, school administrators are prepared in such areas as personnel administration, plant management, legal issues, supervision, and the like. What is often unclear, however, is how the traditional areas of expertise relate to the success of students in the school.

Silver (1983) called for the field of educational administration to refocus its attention from traditional areas to student outcomes. In doing so, she noted that other practical professions normally employ a knowledge base constructed on the kinds of problems faced by the clients served by the profession. Instead of being focused on the day-to-day discomforts encountered by the practicing professional, the professions properly direct their attention to solving problems in order to enhance client success. For the education professional, this entails knowing about

> how schools or organizations affect students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learnings and, more to the point, how administrators can organize those learning environments to both maximize student learning in all those domains and minimize learning inequities in all those domains. (Silver, 1983, p. 12)

Such areas of concentration become for the school administrator the appropriate *problems of practice* of administration.

However, a school administrator always works within a wider context of variables, some of which are alterable by the administrator's action and others of which are entirely uncontrollable. Many aspects of the school environment establish basic *conditions* within which the

principal practices. These conditions often have direct impact on the student's ability to succeed and the school's capacity for assisting in that success. The principal who understands those conditions will understand better how to mount interventions that will either change some negative aspects of the environment or serve as a buffer to offset those negative forces that cannot be directly changed. Consequently, for any principal who wishes to enhance student outcomes, a basic problem of practice is to be able to identify and understand the conditions within which that practice occurs. These conditions of practice are intertwined with the salient features of the urban context addressed above. For the principal, the basic question becomes: How do the various elements of the urban context affect the major components that combine to influence student learning?

Urban Influence on Student Learning: A Framework

Using the work of Silver (1983) as a starting point, a framework can be constructed to organize the main factors of the urban context that are related to student learning in schools and that need to be understood by the school principal (see Fig. 1.1). As Silver suggested, the student is the centerpiece of the framework because the student is the chief client served by the education profession. A student's behavior is strongly influenced by her or his own capabilities and achievements, as well as by three general categories of factors: the home and family, the community, and the school. These three categories are in turn influenced by state and school district factors as well as by the condition of the overall society (for example, the current status of the economy). These categories form the major elements of the organizing framework of this chapter.

This framework is a modification of a model developed by the Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education (1990), which serves as the basis for the work of the Center for Education in the Inner Cities, one of the national research centers established by the U.S. Department of Education. This chapter's framework also adopted elements from Wang, Haertel, and Walberg's (1990) conceptional framework, which was based on a synthesis of 179 scholarly works (also cf. Wang & Peverly, 1986).

A few brief comments are in order regarding this framework. Student behavior (in terms of learning outcomes) is the ultimate focus.

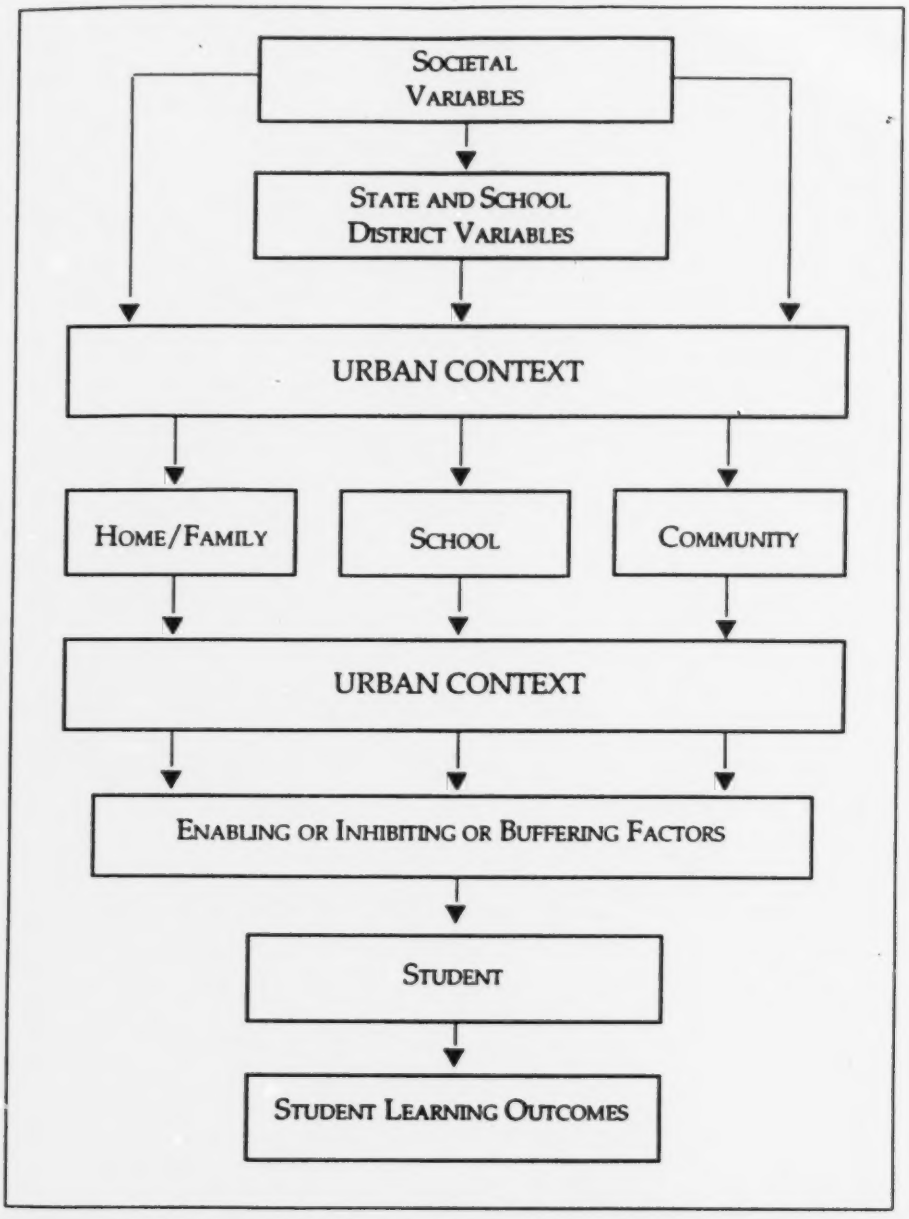

Figure 1.1. A Framework for Organizing the Main Factors Associated With the Urban Context and Influencing Student Learning.

This behavior is the result of a number of very important interactions that occur among the student, the home, the school, and the community. These interactions are mediated by the urban context, insofar as various aspects of that context affect each of the major categories of variables. In addition, the home, the school, and the community are affected by the state, the school district, and the wider society, and these interactions are also mediated by the urban context. The many interactions affecting the student are generally of three types: those that enable the student to learn (for example, family encouragement to read), those that inhibit a student from learning (for example, peer pressures to take drugs), and those that buffer or block the inhibiting pressures (for example, a neighborhood recreation program to combat drug use).

In this regard, Schorr and Schorr's (1988) conception of the exponential effects of risk factors is especially relevant. Building on the work of Escalona (1982), Rutter (1980), and others, the Schorrs described graphically how the addition of factors that tend to place a child at risk of failure in life actually has an exponential effect on that child's life. This is because the individual risk factors interact with each other to create an effect larger than their additive sum. The Schorrs' illustration depicts how such interactions occur:

> The child in a poor family who is malnourished and living in an unheated apartment is more susceptible to ear infection; once the ear infection takes hold, inaccessible or inattentive health care may mean it will not be properly treated; hearing loss in the midst of economic stress may go undetected at home, in day care and by the health system; undetected hearing loss will do long-term damage to a child who needs all the help he can get to cope with a world more complicated than the world of most middle-class children. When this child enters school, his chances of being in an overcrowded classroom with an overwhelmed teacher further compromises his chances of successful learning. Thus risk factors join to shorten the odds of favorable long-term outcomes. (p. 30)

At the same time, as Schorr and Schorr (1988) pointed out, each risk factor that is buffered or removed has an exponential effect in the positive direction. As they documented:

> No one circumstance, no single event, is the cause of a rotten outcome. School failure, delinquency, teenage pregnancy-none is dependent on a single devastating risk factor. But each risk factor vanquished does enhance the odds of averting later serious damage. A healthy birth, a family helped to function even though one parent is depressed and the other seldom there, effective preparation for school entry-all powerfully tip the scales toward favorable outcomes. (p. 32)

Consequently, the model used in this chapter emphasizes the positive (enabling and buffering) and negative (inhibiting) effects of various factors in the urban context, as expressed through the family, school, and community.

In this model, the home and family category includes a number of variables, especially as related to the school. As Ogbu (1981) has indicated, each family needs to be understood in terms of its cultural ecology. In this chapter, attention is drawn to the educative functions of the home and ways in which various structural and dynamic elements of the family serve to create an atmosphere conducive to learning, to mediate learning, and to serve as a buffer for various factors that tend to place the student at risk of failure in school.

The school category includes a number of key elements associated with student learning, from the viewpoint of the school principal. These elements include the makeup of the student body, the faculty, the curriculum and instruction of the school, the overall school climate and culture, the adequacy of financial resources and physical facilities, and the overall school leadership, organization, and governance structures. The emphasis in this chapter is on how these elements are influenced by the urban context.

The community category includes a number of variables both of the immediate neighborhood and of the broader urban community. Of special concern here are the social-political-economic systems of the city, the socioeconomic status of the neighborhood, the social services available for the student, the nonschool education systems (library, mass media, museums), and the peer group. Since the perspective of this chapter is almost entirely from the viewpoint of the public school principal, the availability of private and parochial schools is also an ingredient in this category.

The state and district variables include a number of factors affecting student learning, including school district governance and organizational structures as well as general policies and laws that regulate the practices of the school. Similarly, the category of societal variables includes a number of possible influences. The state of the general economy is an example. This chapter is concerned specifically with those factors at the societal, state, or district levels that differentially affect urban contexts and consequently urban schools.

Finally, a few caveats must be raised about this framework. First, the factors or variables are meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive. The aim of this chapter is to sensitize the principal to the variety of ways in which the urban context might affect learning. The mention of some factors is intended to empower the principal to extend the analysis to additional factors, especially ones in her or his own idiosyncratic situation. In addition, the categories in the framework are not hard-and-fast ones. For example, the community variable involves a number of elements, both citywide as well as local neighborhood. Furthermore, one could argue that the school district is really a part of the wider community (or city). Nonetheless, *from the principal's viewpoint*, it does make some degree of sense to differentiate the two. Also, it needs to be stressed that this framework is not intended to be anything more than a convenient and shorthand way to organize the complex interactions that occur in the real world. This is not intended to be an explanatory model or a predictive theory about the cause-and-effect relationships that actually occur. The most important criterion for this framework to meet is one of utility: Does it help organize this chapter and does it help the principal create her or his own structure to understand better the complex set of relationships in the urban school? Does it facilitate understanding of the ways in which the urban context generates conditions of practice that the principal needs to address in order to enhance student learning in the school?

Conditions of Practice

As a result of the salient features of the urban context mentioned earlier in this chapter, the urban principal must encounter a number of conditions of practice. Although causal relationships are not entirely clear, certain conditions tend to emerge in urban areas, especially in large cities. These conditions are organized here according to the framework outlined above.

Students

Urban school systems have greater variability within their student populations than do nonurban systems. For example, there are a larger concentration of disadvantaged individuals (Hill, Wise & Shapiro, 1989) and a greater number of special-needs students in urban schools than in nonurban schools. An urban student is twice as likely to be achieving at a low level than is that student's nonurban peer (Wolf, 1978). The urban student is also twice as likely to drop out of school or be charged with a crime (Hill, Wise & Shapiro, 1989).

Urban schools have a high concentration of "at-risk students." As Kagan (1990) pointed out, at-risk students often are described according to a general profile, which she depicted as follows:

> At-risk students have low educational aspirations, low self-esteem, an external locus of control, and negative attitudes toward school along with a history of academic failure, truancy, and misconduct, with no indication that they lack requisite aptitudes. (pp. 105-106)

As Kagan further notes, this profile is consistent "over several decades and across varied urban sites" (p. 106). Levin (1989) reported that such at-risk students "are concentrated among minority groups, immigrants, non-English speaking families, families headed by single mothers and economically disadvantaged groups" (p. 47), that is, precisely the groups that disproportionately inhabit our inner cities (Council of the Great City Schools, 1987; 1988).

Numerous data indicate a crisis in urban schools, as reflected in the low achievement of many urban students. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in its special 1988 report entitled *An Imperiled Generation: Saving Urban Schools* cited a number of instances of low achievement, including the following:

> At a Chicago high school, only 10 percent of the entering tenth graders were able to read effectively. In New Orleans, the average high school senior was reading at a level exceeded by 80 percent of the students in the country. In a Houston elementary school, half the students had to repeat a grade because of unsatisfactory academic progress.

> During school visits, we found that 75 percent of the high school freshmen in Chicago had reading test scores below the national average, and only five of that city's sixty-four public high schools had averages approaching national reading norms. Only 229 of the 1,918 students at one Los Angeles high school scored at grade level in reading.
>
> A particularly sobering appraisal was offered by the City-wide Educational Coalition in Boston, which concluded: "Not only do 44 percent of [Boston's] high school students drop out before they reach 12th grade, but over 40 percent of those who do reach 12th grade score below the 30th percentile on a standardized reading test. They may graduate, but they are functionally illiterate." (p. xiii)

The reality behind these statistics and reports reflects the depth of the problem. Watson (1987) wrote:

> The problems seem so complex, the statistics so overwhelming, the magnitude of the proposed remedies so costly, that too many Americans have become paralyzed. The whole scene immobilizes us. But behind those statistics are real people. Each one of the dropouts is an individual, so is each graduate. Each young black man who is killed is somebody's son, just as the person who did the killing is someone's son or daughter. Each of those young people who fails to learn to read or write, to acquire skills, or a diploma, is a person, a person who at some time probably aspired and dreamed of a better life, of participation in the American Dream. They are real flesh and blood; vulnerable, feeling human beings who cannot and should not be dismissed or buried as part of some statistical subset. (p. x)

In the face of such a depressing picture, the principal of an urban school might be tempted to develop a stereotype of the urban student. With so many at-risk children entering school, how can success be anything but limited for the urban school?

Yet, it is precisely this notion of at-risk student that some educators reject. Cuban (1989a) criticized the at-risk concept because in his view it places the blame for failure on the student (or the family or culture of the student). Clayton (1989) similarly attacked the "at-risk rhetoric" as

a misnomer because it connotes that a problem resides in the student or the family. Rather, Clayton proposed, the formulation should be in terms of children of value, "affirming the worth and dignity of the children" (p. 135). She espoused an aggressive advocacy on behalf of children, and based her view on the work of Edmonds, especially his statement that "[w]e can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us" (p. 135).

Both Cuban and Clayton argue a position that has been emerging among some of the top educators addressing urban education: Make the student the focus of our activities in schools and other social services and do not assume that the problem lies with the student. This posture is echoed by Hodgkinson (1989) who described the necessity for us to view the educational system and other social services from the vantage point of the student/client who moves through them. Similarly, Kirst, McLaughlin, and Massell (1990) argued that school administrators "need a better grasp of the educational implications of the everyday lives of children" (p. 69).

Successful principals carry high expectations for their students, even when those students sometimes face seemingly insurmountable odds. They recognize that different students learn in many different ways and at different rates. Indeed, there is an emerging emphasis on the resilience of students who have been able to succeed in life in spite of multiple factors placing them at risk of failure (Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education, 1990). There is a need to place the student at center stage, understand his or her unique patterns of behavior and the context in which they emerged, advocate aggressively on the student's behalf, and hold out models of achievement of other students who have been able to succeed.

The Urban Community

When school people talk about the "community," they generally include virtually the entire local environment outside of the family, the school, and the school district. For the purposes of this chapter, the same general meaning is retained. Thus, community includes both citywide systems and services as well as the neighborhood and immediate environs of the local school site. Earlier, under the section entitled Urban Context, I discussed the major system features of cities, including concentrations of poverty, minority populations, and social isola-

tion. The following section focuses on the more immediate community constituting the school's neighborhood and the delivery of city services with special emphasis on how school and students are affected by the urban context.

The urban community, especially in the large cities, involves a complex set of interactions, institutions, and actors. In the 1990s, several characteristics are especially noteworthy of the community. Deteriorating economic conditions and long-time migration patterns in most cities have been such that poverty and joblessness are concentrated in certain pockets, thereby isolating large groups from the mainstream of American life. Combined with the historical segregation of some racial/ethnic and language minorities, this isolation creates difficult conditions within which our schools must work and has an especially adverse impact on our children. An erosion of the sense of community, services and systems that are fragmented and ineffective, and severe safety health, housing, transportation, and early education problems—all interact to place enormous stress on the city's residents, especially its young.

At the same time, urban communities have major resources, including financial, economic, cultural, religious, and nonschool educative institutions. As Hill, Wise, and Shapiro (1989) pointed out, these urban resources are considerable:

> Every city possesses such major assets as an educated middle class, black and white; large, well-managed businesses; important financial institutions; powerful research universities; and potentially generous local foundations. All have sophisticated political, religious and social leaders capable of uniting to solve a problem if they consider it significant. (p. 4)

These resources can be tapped to help offset and buffer the dysfunctional elements and pathologies that exist in certain areas of the large cities. For the sake of brevity, the following will highlight the pathologies in the areas of neighborhood social capital, transportation, housing, health inadequacies, and crime. These exemplify the kinds of community forces that can affect the education of our young and over which our schools have relatively low levels of influence.

As explained earlier, *severe concentration of poverty and social isolation* of the inner-city from the mainstream of American life have created a

hypersegregation of deprived populations. One particularly poignant manifestation of the impact of these forces on a local neighborhood is the diminished social capital available after working-class and middle-class families depart from the neighborhood. Schorr and Schorr (1988) quoted one neighborhood leader in the Harlem section of New York City, who said that of 454 families in a particular block, there were 600 children and no more than 10 to 15 men. The Schorrs observed:

> A boy being brought up by a mother alone, even a poor mother alone, need not necessarily suffer damaging effects. . . . But when single parenting is not only a family fact but a community fact, the effect-especially on boys-can be highly disruptive of normal development. When the whole neighborhood is made up of families without fathers or a consistent male presence, not only the income but also the discipline and role models that fathers traditionally have provided are missing. Boys are left to learn about manhood on the streets, where the temptation is strong to demonstrate powers through lawbreaking, violence, and fathering a child. (p. 20)

What is true for the need of male models is likely true also for the need for models of working and middle class adults able to demonstrate regular employment and entrepreneurship and the behavior patterns associated with them. Especially needed are models who are able to show a connection between educational achievement in school and success in later life.

Transportation also has implications for city students. Hodgkinson (1989) wrote:

> Our school bus fleet is mainly suburban, leaving students in inner-city schools with more walking to subway or commercial bus routes, more travel through dangerous streets. Even with reduced or free fares, the danger level is still considerably higher for city schools. On the other hand, increased population density in many cities means a short walk or ride to school, even though the short trip may be risky. (p. 11)

Moreover, unlike suburban bus transportation, the dependence of inner-city youth on pubic transportation often means that they are in

transit without adult supervision. Not only does this contribute to safety problems, it also likely has a role in tardiness and school truancy. At the same time, transportation poses a special problem for those in the lowest income levels, often without a reliable car. The family headed by a single mother is especially affected:

> The educationally related transport problem most in need of repair is that of low income families with children, in which the mother must get the kids to day care and herself to work. Without a car, these trips can be a most excruciating combination of buses and subways, held together by a fragile thread. If the ride consists of four buses in sequence, one miss can mean a major delay, and that's just to get the kids to day care. Then another complicated sequence to get yourself to work, followed by the reverse at the end of day. If a child is sick, you add to that recipe the problem of getting to medical services by public transportation *before* you get yourself to work. (Hodgkinson, 1989, p. 10)

Similarly, the mother in this situation will find it extremely difficult to get to school during the workweek for conferences, school meetings, and the like. This places serious constraints on the single parent's ability to participate in the school and to stay informed about her child's progress as a student.

The education of urban students is also seriously affected by the availability and quality of *housing*. Hodgkinson (1989) provided data on the problems of housing for the poor:

- The costs of housing have increased three times more rapidly than income over the past 15 years thereby putting home ownership even more out of the reach of low income families.
- From 1984 through 1986, the availability of low-income housing decreased by over one million units nationally. During the same period, the number of households with an income below $5,000 annually actually increased by 55%.
- The costs of rent equal 81% of the income of young single parents with children in 1988.
- Over 50% of the homeless in cities are made up of families.

- About 43% of homeless children have developmental problems. (pp. 6-7)

Also, housing inadequacy is more prevalent among African American children (Council of the Great City Schools, 1987). The problems of housing inadequacy are captured in Hodgkinson's (1989) portrait of a low-income family with limited room:

> In a one-bedroom apartment, the child's "room" is likely to be a convertible sofa in the living room, including the television, the phone and other distractions, right next to a busy, noisy kitchen.... In addition, rents are such a high percentage of this family's income that *any* crisis-repairs on the car, for example—can tip the family into the street as additional homeless. (p. 8)

Hodgkinson concluded that housing is a major factor affecting failure in school.

The problems of housing in poverty-stricken, inner-city neighborhoods are certainly exacerbated and probably caused to some extent by unfair home mortgage lending practices. In 1988, a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative series in *The Atlanta Journal/The Atlanta Constitution* described in detail how such practices discriminated against African Americans in the city. Analysis of the neighborhoods in which most African Americans lived and the ones in which home loans were made by Atlanta's banks and savings and loans institutions indicated "race-not home value or household income-consistently determines the lending patterns of metro Atlanta's largest financial institutions" (Dedman, 1988a, p. 1). These investigative articles went on to demonstrate how such lending practices fit into the history of racial discrimination in the patterns of lending in the United States. For example, Homer Hoyt who was "hired by the federal government to develop the first underwriting criteria-who is a good credit risk and who is not-for the new Federal Housing Administration (FHA)" (Dedman, 1988b, p. 12), had the following history:

> In 1933, a respected economist at the University of Chicago, Homer Hoyt, published a list of racial groups, ranking them from positive to negative influence on property values:

1. English, Scotch, Irish, Scandinavians
2. North Italians
3. Bohemians or Czechs
4. Poles
5. Lithuanians
6. Greeks
7. Russians, Jews (lower class)
8. South Italians
9. Negroes
10. Mexicans (Dedman, 1988b, p. 12)

Dedman went on to show how such stereotypes became embodied in lending practices. It is no coincidence then that the Federal Housing Authority in 1939 took the position that "[i]f a neighborhood is to retain stability, it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes" (Jackson, 1985, p. 208). Such an attitude continues to be prevalent among some real estate brokers and lending institutions and contributes to the isolation of many of our urban neighborhoods.

Dedman (1988b) also demonstrated how the concentration of loans guaranteed by the federal government (the Federal Housing Authority and the Veterans Administration) and the lack of conventional loans are associated with the decline of a neighborhood. He wrote:

> However, FHA and VA loans can have disadvantages for the neighborhood. If an area has many FHA and VA loans, bank and savings and loans may not make conventional loans there. . . . Whatever the cause and effect home buyers and homeowners in black neighborhoods can be trapped in an endless Catch-22.

- Bank loan officers have become conditioned to steer clear of neighborhoods with a preponderance of FHA and VA loans.
- Without a good mix of credit to fuel it, including conventional lenders, the housing market in the neighborhood sputters and property values stall.

- Stagnant property values discourage investment and reinforce bank skepticism about the neighborhood, and the cycle begins again. (Dedman, 1988b, p. 16)

Such a downward spiral works against the urban neighborhoods and reinforces racial stereotyping and isolation.

Poverty is clearly related to higher rates of *health problems* (Kirst, McLaughlin & Massell, 1990). The crisis in the quality of health in the inner city is shockingly evident in the 1990 study of mortality in Harlem reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Stating that the "pattern of medical care in Harlem is similar to that reported for the other poor and black communities" (p. 173), McCord and Freeman (1990) analyzed death rates for the population between the ages of 5 and 65. They found that for 19 out of 20 categories of cause of death, the death rates were higher than for the white population as a whole. (The only exception being the category of suicide). They concluded that "a male born in Harlem has only a 40 percent chance of living to age 65" and that this probability is worse than for a resident of Bangladesh (Maykuth, 1990, p. 3-A). Other statistics are similarly alarming for urban populations. Infant deaths in the United States are higher in the central cities (Council of the Great City Schools, 1987). The rates of infant mortality among African Americans are two times higher than those of white Americans (Hodgkinson, 1989). Lead poisoning is a particular scourge of the inner-city poor. One researcher estimated that "55 percent of poor, black urban children under the age of 6 have elevated levels of lead in the blood" (Schmidt, 1990, p. 32). He also concluded, on the basis of a long-term study, that teenage students who had been exposed to lead early in their lives were much more likely to have reading disabilities and drop out of school. The problem stems from the widespread presence of lead paint on older, inner-city houses. The paint crumbles and oxidizes and becomes airborne. Even the soil of some portions of a city are contaminated. It is estimated that, for children aged six months through five years old, 62% in Philadelphia, 74% in New York City, and 69% in Boston have blood levels of lead above the point at which researchers have established that learning and central nervous system dysfunctions occur (Jaffe, 1990a; 1990b).

Especially frustrating is the fact that many of the health problems afflicting urban youth are preventable. Schorr and Schorr (1988) told the story of youngsters whose undiagnosed medical problems led to

serious conditions resulting in significant behavioral dysfunctioning. These cases occurred because of a series of factors related to poverty. The case of a child named Gail

> illustrates the fact that most health care works best for families with the means and knowledge to monitor their own care, identify their needs, and see to it that they are met. Gail's family had little education, was overwhelmed by other problems, and had no idea what Gail's examination had shown or that follow-up neurological tests had been recommended. . . . [N]o single professional had a continuing responsibility for making sense of the many complicated factors in Gail's background. . . .
>
> But Gail's family was dependent on episodic care in a local hospital clinic, where patients typically see physicians they have never seen before and do not expect to see again. In such circumstances accurate diagnosis is difficult, and the prospects for proper treatment and management of complex conditions are low (pp. 90-91).

Another of the most serious problems for students in inner-cities is the concern for *safety*. During the decade of 1977 through 1987, violent crimes rose by 43% in the 59 largest U.S. cities (Irwin, 1989, p. 9-A). The neighborhoods surrounding some inner-city schools create a dangerous environment for our youth. For example, Menacker, Weldon, and Hurwitz (1989) studied four inner-city elementary schools in Chicago. They reviewed the files of the city police over a two-year period and discovered the following:

> Police records showed that the area surrounding two of those schools had been the scene of five murders, one manslaughter, 17 aggravated assaults, five criminal assaults, 48 simple assaults, 116 armed robberies, 108 strong-arm robberies, 103 batteries with a weapon, 115 batteries with no weapon, 121 burglaries, 58 thefts of more than $300, 193 thefts of less than $300, 11 cases of arson, 67 cases of property damage, and 23 cases of unlawful possession of a handgun. (p. 40)

During the year 1990, reports of killings of young children appeared in our newspapers as drug-related violence in cities claimed

innocent victims caught by stray bullets (Terry, 1990). Not surprisingly, some of these problems spill over into the schools. The *Safe Schools-Violent Schools* study found that 40% of the robberies and 36% of the assaults on urban youth occurred in the schools (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and National Institute of Education, 1978). The Menacker, Weldon, and Hurwitz (1989) study found that more than 50% of students had at least one theft occur during a year, 32% carried a weapon to school, and 15% reported hitting a teacher. Zinsmeister (1990) estimated that, nationally, there are about 3 million incidents of street crime (assault, rape, robbery, or theft) on school property annually and that about 338,000 students had carried a handgun to school at least once in 1987, with an alarming number (about 100,000) carrying a gun *daily!*

These problems are accompanied by a proliferation of gang violence in some urban areas (Garrison, 1989). Moreover, the presence of illegal drugs in our cities not only spawns violence but also forces our schools to deal with children who have been exposed to drugs, many prenatally, and who thus come to school at serious risk of failure (Viadero, 1989). Wilson (1987) hypothesized that some of the high rates of crime and gang activity might be explainable by the dense concentrations of large numbers of urban youth. He wrote that

> there may be a "critical mass" of young persons in a given community such that when that mass is reached or is increased suddenly and substantially, "a self-sustaining chain reaction is set off that creates an explosive increase in the amount of crime, addiction, and welfare dependency." (p. 38; also, Wilson, 1975, pp. 17-18)

Even in the face of such statistics, Menacker, Weldon, and Hurwitz (1989) found that the public school is an "island of relative safety in an ocean of danger that surrounds the school" (p. 39). They argued that only a comprehensive, coordinated safety approach in which the school is one element in a total community effort can be successful in combating crime and violence. An effective disciplinary code could be developed, they found, along with a community involvement whereby community members developed a psychological ownership over security matters.

Over and above the pathologies associated with transportation, housing, health inadequacies, and crime in urban neighborhoods, there are also problems with the *delivery of the city services* that are supposed to address these pathologies. Kirst, McLaughlin, and Massell (1990) identified two sets of problems of services for children, especially those children who have multiple special needs. First are problems of underservice. Substantial numbers of needy children do not receive sufficient support. For example, funding for such programs as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), an important source of minimal support for the very needy, has been diminishing over the years. As Kirst, McLaughlin, and Massell (1990) reported for 1985-1986, the parents of only one-half of all children defined as poor received AFDC income; 39% of those children who met the eligibility requirements of the free or reduced-price lunch programs actually received such lunches; and only 38% of eligible poor families actually received food stamps (p. 74). Such considerable underservice denies the minimal levels of services that poor families, heavily concentrated in urban areas, need.

Yet, a second problem of social service delivery is its severe fragmentation. For example, "in California, over 160 programs located in thirty-five agencies and seven departments exist to serve children and youth, an array which is certainly not unique to that state" (Kirst, McLaughlin & Massell, 1990, p. 75). Such fragmentation, however well intentioned each program might be in its own right, can be dysfunctional when viewed from the vantage point of the individual student receiving the service. Comer (1988) told of the following case in a school in New Haven, Connecticut "we ran into a situation where one child at one of the schools we were in was being seen by seven different people, and taken in and out of the classroom for help, and they did not talk to each other" (p. 55).

What kind of effects would such a situation have on a student? Which professional would bring some sense of continuity and unity of service for the student? As Kirst, McLaughlin, and Massell (1990) wrote, the substantial fragmentation of services to students have at least five negative consequences. Individual problems are viewed in their isolation and the student is labeled according to the problem. There is a discontinuity of care as a student moves from one jurisdiction to another. Different service agencies have different goals, and those goals can be conflicting; for example, one agency's approach to child

care might be custodial while another's is developmental in nature. A lack of communication among service providers can mean an inability to bring available resources to bear on a student's problems. And fragmentation leads ultimately to a disempowered youth, since no one takes the overall view of the student and since the student perceives herself or himself to be a pawn of the many systems providing unconnected services. Kirst, McLaughlin, and Massell (1990) also noted that schools, which over the years have deliberately developed structures and practices separate from county and city governments, are a key element in this overall problem of service fragmentation. They suggested that we need to rethink our service delivery systems from the viewpoint of our children and that educators, especially administrators, need to be more attentive to the everyday lives of youth. Similarly, Hodgkinson (1989) argued that the student/client must be viewed as the centerpiece and most important element of our service organizations. He quoted from the 1930 report of the White House Conference on Children and Youth, and the words are still relevant 60 years later:

> To the doctor, the child is a typhoid patient; to the playground supervisor, a first baseman; to the teacher, a learner of arithmetic. At times, he may be different things to each of these specialists, but rarely is he a whole child to any of them. (opposite p. 1)

Over and above the problems and pathologies already discussed, other problems exist that have relevance to the school. The urban principal needs to use the problems presented above as suggestive of the kinds of ways in which the neighborhood is affected by the urban context and how the school can be influenced. What is clear is that such problems derive from fundamental factors at work in society as a whole. The effect is that the neighborhood is buffeted as much as, or even more than, the school.

At the same time, the city is a source of numerous *resources and services*, even if they are highly fragmented. There are businesses and corporations that have the ability to support a local school and that themselves provide education to employees. There are numerous examples of business-school partnerships that increase the school's capacity to provide a quality education (Justiz & Kameen, 1987). Cities have an extensive range of health-care facilities, mental health clinics, homeless shelters, social service agencies and other care-giving facili-

ties. Research universities provide direct assistance for schools. Foundations have the potential to provide considerable funding for special projects and initiatives. Cities have extensive youth service agencies, libraries, museums, and media.

Levine and Havighurst (1968) described the extent of an urban area's institutions and services in terms of fourteen social systems: local government, public services (e.g., police), cultural institutions (e.g., museums), recreational systems, social welfare, religious organizations and congregations, economic systems, civic spirit and social betterment associations, political systems, social leisure clubs and groups, health maintenance systems, transportation system, communications, and educational systems. Since another chapter in this book is devoted to the topic of urban resources, this chapter will not address these subsystems. What is important for the urban principal is that each of the subsystems mentioned above is made up of a set of actors, institutions and services that can be of assistance to the school in pursuing its mission. The inter-activist principal is able to analyze the opportunities and identify the ways in which functional linkages can be constructed. The school is one element in an interactive network of problems and opportunities.

One context in which to view the abundant resources of the city is to explore ways in which education occurs and might occur in nonschool settings within the city. Goodlad (1984) asked whether schools are trying to do too much and called for them to refocus their energies on better defined goals. Similarly, Fantini and Sinclair (1985) argued that society has expected that public schools attempt to accomplish too much. They called (1) for other institutions within society to assume greater responsibility for education and (2) for the school to reexamine its mission and to build partnerships with other educative, nonschool institutions. Fantini (1985) believed that in order to prepare adequately for the Information Age, society needs to move away from a school-based system of education, in which the school is responsible for delivering nearly all educational services. Instead, what is needed, according to Fantini, is a community-based, lifelong learning system in which the school orchestrates and coordinates a whole range of educative activities, some of which are delivered directly by the school and others of which come through other educative institutions. This means that current *school reform* efforts are not enough; *education reform* is necessary to reorder priorities and reconstruct relationships within the

entire community. Fantini (1986) further called for an urban strategy of reform that includes citywide partnerships, the use of magnet schools, a mobilization of community resources, better use of computers and telecommunications, school-based management structures, and better links between schools and community (including parent) advisory councils. Fantini also stated that such reform needs to embody the following basic principles that have emerged from research and experience and that represent the state of our knowledge about educational excellence:

- All people can learn; there are not learner failures, only program failures.
- Learners should be able to choose among a range of legitimate learning environments.
- There are multiple intelligences and talents among people and they are expressed in different ways.
- A learner should have control over his or her own fate.
- There is a broad range of individual differences.
- Every person has the right to a complete, quality education.
- There is great potential for teaching and learning through telecommunications and new technologies.
- There needs to be a close linkage between school and nonschool learning.
- Testing and evaluation need to become more focused upon diagnosis and assistance to learners and teachers.
- We need to draw upon the best research and development in education.
- The goal is lifelong learning in the educative community, tying together many learning environments, actors and institutions.

Based upon these principles, the school can more effectively relate to the many resources of the city and reconceptualize its role within a broad educative community.

Home and Family

As the primary influence on the life of the child, the family should be the basic institution upon which other socializing institutions within society build. It is amazing, therefore, that the traditional nuclear family, based upon the image of the self-sufficient farm family, continues to be the standard model for Americans (Wagstaff & Gallagher, 1990). The societal institutions that serve young people, including the school, are structured on this model, even though this traditional stereotype actually fits fewer than one-third of all U.S. families (Kirst, McLaughlin & Massell, 1990). In fact, it is estimated that over one-half of all young people will live in a single-parent home at some time (Kirst, McLaughlin & Massell, 1990). Given the nontraditional nature of the vast majority of families, therefore, it makes sense that any given family is best understood within its own context, what Ogbu (1981) termed a "cultural-ecological perspective," rather than by comparison with other groups (Wagstaff & Gallagher, 1990).

Trends in key indicators about the family suggest that many families, especially those in urban areas, are troubled. Female-headed families, many of whom are heavily concentrated in the inner cities, are disproportionately poor. Moreover, single-parent families also vary considerably by race. Of all children in such families, 10% are Asian Americans, 12% white Americans, 24% Hispanic Americans, and 52% African Americans (Kirst & McLaughlin, 1990). In 1985, "20 percent of all children, 54 percent of children in female-headed families and 78 percent of black children in female-headed families lived in poverty" (Wagstaff & Gallagher, 1990, p. 103). Families with two parents and no children and families with single-parent females who have children in need of welfare support are the two fastest-growing family structures (Coleman, 1987; Mitchell, 1990). As Hoffer and Coleman (1990) noted, there is a "pattern of growing inequality of family background which one would expect to find reflected in measures of educational outcomes" (p. 123). If this hypothesis is correct, then school achievement is likely to be adversely affected, as family structures continue to change for urban populations.

Schorr and Schorr (1988) explained how all families need some support, whether formal or informal, at some time to help them raise children. The essential need of a child for "coherence, structure, and predictability" (p. 151) is fundamentally grounded in the early child-

rearing practices of the family. But various stresses on the family can place the child at risk if there are not forces to buffer these stresses. As Schorr and Schorr (1988) described:

> Both common sense and research tell us that as family stress, *regardless of its source*, increases, the capacity for nurturing decreases, and the likelihood of abuse and neglect increases. Whether the stress stems from insufficient income, a difficult child, an impaired adult, family violence and discord, inadequate housing, chronic hunger and poor health, or surroundings of brutality, hopelessness, and despair - these are circumstances in which affection withers into hostility, discipline turns into abuse, stability dissolves into chaos, and love becomes neglect. (p. 151)

Such stress on the family can become most dysfunctional in those neighborhoods that have the lowest levels of supportive mechanisms, namely, the poorest of the inner-city neighborhoods. Once again, Schorr and Schorr (1988) noted:

> Social isolation cuts across class lines but is worst in poor neighborhoods, where everyone is stressed and few have energy to spare. James Garbarino and D. Sherman, experts in the social content of child abuse, believe that the increasing incidence of child abuse is directly related to the spread of "socially impoverished environments, denuded of enduring supportive relationships" and the scarcity of people "free from drain" who can afford to be supportive to neighbors because their own needs do not exceed their resources. (p. 154)

Thus, the total social capital available within the neighborhood in which poverty is extreme and concentrated and social isolation is characteristic is not sufficient to support families in need. Other neighborhoods with a greater reservoir of social capital might be able to bolster a family in stress. But inner-city neighborhoods in extreme poverty can not, so child rearing under stress is much more difficult. Where informal supports are not forthcoming, there is a greater dependence on formal supports of social service institutions. When those formal supports are not present or are insufficient in quality or scope,

the family under stress is forced to depend on its own resources, which often are simply not enough to insure adequate child rearing.

One stress that inner-city families must face is the absence of fathers and the high incidence of unmarried mothers. Wilson (1989) argued that such an occurrence was based on the effects of joblessness and economic exclusion for inner-city residents. Citing the work of Testa, Astone, Krogh, and Neckerman (1989), Wilson noted that employed fathers are 2 1/2 times more likely to marry the mother of their firstborn child than are unemployed fathers. Therefore, joblessness is central to the fact that many children in the ghetto do not have married parents. This effect of joblessness pertains not only for African Americans but also for Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, and white Americans. This is but another indication that dysfunctional elements in the inner city have a systemic basis related to broader forces of the economy and the urban context.

The problems of inner-city families are intensified when there is discontinuity between school and home. According to cultural discontinuity theory, "low-income disadvantaged children arrive at school with a different background in linguistic, cognitive, motivational, and social development than that of middle-class children" (Boyd, 1990, p. 26). Since lower-class students have more restricted language patterns and middle-class students more elaborate ones (Bernstein, 1973; Boyd, 1990), the school, which is based on middle-class patterns, is discontinuous with the family and communities of lower-class students. In the face of such cultural discontinuity, Cazden and Mehan (1989) argued that schools should not deny the significance of the language and culture of the home. Instead, they recommended that both the student and the school need to adapt to each other in a mutual accommodation so that each changes behavior in order to accomplish a common goal. This is consistent with research that has found that the parents of minority students are excluded from school involvement and do not know exactly how to help their children academically even though they want their children to succeed in school and would like to become more involved in helping them to succeed (Wong Fillmore, 1983; Cummins, 1986).

What then constitutes a desirable relationship between the family and the school? According to the research, parental involvement in their children's education is positively correlated with children's school achievement (Epstein, 1989). Even more, such parental involvement

appears to be especially important for success in low-income communities (*The Harvard Education Letter*, 1988). Yet, parental involvement is often not high in the inner cities. Is this the fault of the family or the school? Research evidence indicates that the "school's practices to inform and to involve parents are more important than parent education, family size, marital status, and even grade level in determining whether inner-city parents get involved" (Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools, 1989, p.10; also, Epstein & Dauber, 1989; Dauber & Epstein, 1989). This means the onus for establishing appropriate levels of parental involvement in inner cities rests with the school.

School

As we have seen, the urban context has a number of implications for the neighborhood community and the family. The context also affects the school, especially its student body, its teaching staff, its curriculum and instructional programs, and its physical facilities and resources. Let me address each of these briefly after first discussing a crucial point: What should be the principal's overall attitude about the school-student interaction in our cities?

The basic attitudinal question that a school leader needs to confront is this: When learning does not occur, who is responsible? A common attitude among school people is to blame the student or the student's cultural background. These are termed, respectively, the student deficit and the cultural deficit models to indicate that there are fundamental lacks within the student or within the cultural background that make learning very difficult. These models are variously portrayed. Goodlad and Oakes's (1988) description captured the basic attitude from a historical perspective:

> The more noticeable the differences-as in language, color, dress, and the like-the more likely are negative comparisons. Early in this century, the influx of immigrants speaking languages other than English was accompanied by fear on the part of English-speaking settlers that the culture would be watered down. The use of the Binet test by H. H. Goodard (Harvard University) at Ellis Island led him to the bizarre conclusion that large percentages of the immigrants were feebleminded (in

> Gould, 1981). This kind of thinking accompanied the myth that native indians and blacks were intellectually inferior.
>
> The advent of near-universal schooling and the equating of education with schooling contributed greatly to misunderstanding about individual learning differences and about different kinds of intelligence. To be intelligent frequently was equated with doing well in school.
>
> The school's general failure to provide for, let alone capitalize on, different kinds of intelligence and styles of learning resulted in clearly prejudicial practices. (p. 18)

Goodlad and Oakes urged educators to rid themselves and their schools of these kinds of misperceptions of intelligence and to reform school structures that had been built upon them.

Comer (1988) recounted a similar view from his experience in the New Haven schools. Based on his work within schools, he came to the conclusion that most of the behavioral and mental health problems of the students he encountered in these inner-city schools were "really created by the climate and conditions of the school" (p. 56). Kagan (1990) came to the same conclusion about how school practices cause at-risk students to drop out of school. Citing the work of Edmonds (1986) on how an effective school could be "so potent that for at least six hours a day it can override almost everything else in the lives of children" (p. 103), Kagan (1990) developed a model based on the assumption that "factors within classrooms transform at-risk students into a discrete subculture that is functionally incompatible with school success" resulting in "alienation, a feeling of isolation and estrangement. . . . and academic failure" (p. 108). In short, Kagan said that dropping out of school by at-risk students is a symptom of a pathology of the *institution* (the school) rather than of the individual student.

The solution at minimum is to make certain that urban schools do not establish structures that cause at-risk students to become alienated from school. Even more so, we need to design what Hodgkinson (1988) called the "right schools for the right kids," making reference to the pluralism emerging from the demographic trends of the students to be served by the schools:

> Our schools need to be more responsive to the diversity of students including the challenges that come from the problems

> associated with poverty, non-English speaking populations and an increasing number of students with physical and emotional disabilities (p. 14).

In addition to this issue of overall attitude in working with the diversity of urban children and cultures, there are also challenges to the urban school that arise from the nature of its student body, teaching staff, curriculum and instructional program, and physical facilities and resources. Let me turn to a brief review of some of the issues involved in each of these areas. In the interest of brevity, I will mention some issues that are suggestive of the kinds that an urban principal needs to understand rather than attempting to cover all issues comprehensively.

With respect to the *student body*, I have already reviewed major issues from the viewpoint of the student. My concern here is the peer group as it influences the individual student. According to Hoffer and Coleman (1990), the peer group is emerging as a stronger influence on the child, particularly as the family has had a diminishing role in education and as the school is perceived by students as too impersonal. Consequently, peer influence from other students has an increasing effect. Within urban schools, some of this influence has been negative, especially for some minorities. For example, Fordham (1988) described how high-achieving African-American youth sometimes experience a conflict between racial identity with the collective ethos of their community and the individualistic values of the school. One of the strategies some African-American high school students employ when they succeed in school is to become "raceless," that is, to disaffiliate themselves from their collective ethos and to assimilate into the school culture. However, as Fordham (1988) noted, for many African-American adolescents, the sacrifice of cultural affiliation is too high a price. This is especially true for adolescent males:

> When compared with the female students, the high-achieving males appear to be less committed to the cultural system of the larger society and far more confused and ambivalent about the value of forsaking their indigenous beliefs and values. Hence, the high-achieving male students mask their raceless personae to a far greater degree than their female counterparts in the school context. (p. 80)

In this way, urban schools have a major challenge: How to encourage high achievement in its students without requiring them to forsake their cultural backgrounds.

With respect to the urban school's *teaching staff*, the school once again is faced with challenges that derive from the nature of the urban context. Urban schools have a great deal of difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified teachers (Council of the Great City Schools, 1988; Haberman, 1987). There continue to be significant shortages in the number of minority teachers as well as teachers in the specialties of mathematics, science, special education, and bilingual education. Whereas once urban teachers had a salary advantage, it is no longer so, as many suburban districts offer lucrative salary and benefit packages. Urban districts are also challenged by inferior working conditions, low teacher morale, high turnover of teachers, and a lack of professional status (Council of the Great City Schools, 1988). Moreover, even when an urban school is able to hire teachers, there is likely to be a high degree of incongruity between the cultural backgrounds of the teachers and those of the students. Cazden and Mehan (1989) described the problem of a mismatch between new teachers and their students: "The typical beginning teacher in the 1990's will be female, in the early to mid-twenties, Anglo, and from a lower-middle income to middle-income family. . . . [These cultural background characteristics] will not match those of their pupils" (p. 47). Grant (1989) observed that these new teachers do not have an interest in teaching in urban areas and would leave to teach in the suburbs if they could. Parkay (1983) depicted the culture shock of a new teacher teaching for the first time in an urban setting. Moreover, new teachers in general are less likely to change even negative school characteristics since they have an inclination to accept traditional school norms without questioning them (Florio-Ruane, 1989). Also, some researchers have found that suburban teachers are engaged in higher levels of academic interaction with their students than are urban teachers (Greenwood, Whorton & Delquadri, 1984). For all of these reasons, some experts have recommended new approaches to recruit and select teachers, including a greater involvement of urban public schools in the preparation of urban teachers (e.g., Haberman, 1987).

With respect to the *curriculum and instructional programs*, Fantini and Weinstein (1968) noted that the urban school curriculum is not relevant to and even works against the "curriculum" of daily urban life.

Consequently, they recommended that urban schools become better integrated with their communities. Schools could do so if they develop curricula that engage pupils in examining the social realities of the city, teach learning skills that will permit them to influence those realities, and provide occasions in which these skills can actually be applied to those realities in real-life situations. Fantini and Weinstein urged urban schools to encourage diversity of all kinds, both individual and cultural. In essence, they called for the richness of the urban setting to be brought into the formal classroom. Comer (1988) likewise stressed a curriculum more relevant to urban students. In the New Haven schools, he asked parents about what they wanted for their children. The result was a social skills curriculum for inner-city children that integrated the learning of academic skills, social skills, and the appreciation of the arts through units on politics and government, business and economics, health and nutrition, and spiritual and leisure time activities. This curriculum, according to Comer, was both meaningful and useful to the students while still being academic in nature. The question of relevance has prompted some educators to propose an Ethnocentric or Afrocentric Curriculum to provide urban students with alternatives to the traditional Eurocentric curriculum (Viadero, 1990).

Critiques of urban schools have extended beyond the curriculum into the instructional practices and structures for teaching and learning. Noting research that stated that urban school systems retain between 15% and 20% of students at each grade level (Gottfredson, 1988), McPartland and Slavin (1990) criticized urban schools' current instructional structures, including retention in grade, teaching, and special-education placements. They proposed a set of alternatives, based on the accumulated research, in order to increase the achievement of at-risk students. Wang, Reynolds, and Walberg (1988) suggested that schools need to stop the practice of labeling special-needs students and removing them from the regular classroom. They proposed the development of new instructional delivery models in the regular classroom. Cuban (1989a) demonstrated how the graded school structure contributes to the failure of at-risk students and recommended restructuring alternatives to make schools more appropriate for those students. Levin (1988) developed an alternative program, termed the *accelerated school program*, which draws on the strengths and talents of disadvantaged students, including:

> an interest and a curiosity in oral and artistic expression, abilities to learn through the manipulation of appropriate learning materials. . . ., a capability for engrossment in intrinsically interesting tasks, and the ability to learn to write before attaining competence in decoding skills which are prerequisite to reading. In addition, such students can serve as enthusiastic and effective learning resources for other students through peer tutoring and cooperative-learning approaches. (Levin 1988, p. 216)

Also, there is strong research evidence that *cooperative learning*, as opposed to traditional classroom instruction, is an effective approach for teaching at-risk students (Slavin & Madden, 1989). And Cummins (1986) developed a framework to permit educators and schools to "redefine their roles with respect to minority students and communities" (p. 19). The framework emphasized the empowerment of students, respect for the students' culture and language in the home, involvement of family and community, and pedagogical approaches that permit students to become more active learners.

With respect to *physical facilities*, it is clear that urban schools have serious problems that need to be addressed. Urban schools are located in older buildings, and in the largest cities at least one-third of all buildings are over 50 years old (Council of the Great City Schools, 1987). Many facilities are in a dilapidated condition, and cleanliness and plant condition are often rated below average (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1988). The problems associated with the upkeep of school buildings and facilities come from a variety of sources: the large number of buildings needing maintenance, the need to negotiate with many different unions, the regulations of many municipal and state agencies, the demands of demographic changes and educational reforms, the establishment of numerous building ordinances since most city schools were originally built (e.g., ordinances regarding asbestos abatement, fire, electrical wiring, handicapped access), and the difficulties of new construction because of scarce land, zoning requirements, and crowded infrastructures beneath city streets (Council of the Great City Schools, 1987). The presence of asbestos and the laws involving its removal place extraordinary demands on urban schools (Romano, 1989). All in all, there is need for a massive dedication

of funds to upgrade facilities if students are to get the message "that they and their schools are important" (Picigallo, 1989).

With respect to *financial resources*, urban schools have been shown to be lacking necessary levels, especially in big cities. Because of multiple demands placed on schools and limited means to meet those demands, urban schools have a limited capacity to meet their identified needs, especially those of its diverse populations (Council of the Great City Schools, 1987). External financial support is important; however, it is not enough by itself. Adequate financial resources are necessary, but insufficient for school improvement (Clark, Lotto & McCarthy, 1980). Research has shown that the *ways* in which resources are used are extremely important to school success. It is also worth noting that one reason urban schools are in such need of additional financial resources is because they have such a wide range of individual differences they need to serve, including large numbers of students considered to be at risk of failure in school. As Levin (1989) demonstrated, although the costs of intervention with at-risk students is high, such an investment is cost-effective and "yields high returns to society" (p. 53), especially in comparison to the very high costs to society of failure.

One of the most comprehensive arguments for increased funding for urban schools came from a 1990 decision by the New Jersey Supreme Court to declare New Jersey's Public School Act of 1975 unconstitutional as it applied to poorer urban school districts (*Abbott v. Burke*, 1990). (See also ensuing chapter 6, "Acquiring and Using Resources.") In very clear and sometimes scathing terms, the court espoused the cause of urban school districts vis-á-vis more affluent suburban ones. For example, the ruling very decisively stated "these students in poorer urban districts have not been able to participate fully as citizens and workers in our society. . . . We find the constitutional failure clear, severe, extensive, and of long duration" (p. 408). The court also observed that the problems facing urban populations are broad ones extending to our wider society:

> The fact is that a large part of our society is disintegrating, so large a part that it cannot help but affect the rest. Everyone's future is at stake, and not just the poor's. Certainly the urban poor need more than education, but it is hard to believe that their isolation and society's division can be reversed without it. (p. 412)

The court explicitly recognized the plight of students living in urban poverty by noting the following:

> Their cities have deteriorated and their lives are often bleak. They live in a culture where schools, studying, and homework are secondary. Their test scores, their dropout rate, their attendance at college, all indicate a severe failure of education. While education is largely absent from their lives, we get some idea of what is present from the crime rate, disease rate, drug addiction rate, teenage pregnancy rate, and the unemployment rate. (p. 411)

Moreover, the court emphasized that it is New Jersey's duty to provide a thorough and efficient education to poor students and that the past failure to do so has exacerbated the problems of the urban students. The court stated: "Today the disadvantaged are doubly mistreated: first, by the accident of their environment and, second, by the disadvantage added by an inadequate education. The State has compounded the wrong and must right it" (p. 403).

In making its decision, the court reviewed a substantial amount of statistical data on the relationships involving per-pupil expenditures and other indicators of wealth, tax burden, and educational quality. In doing so, the court acknowledged the municipal overburden argument whereby cities levy overall excessive taxes in order to provide for governmental services over and above education:

> The social and economic pressures on municipalities, school districts, public officials, and citizens of these disaster areas-many poorer urban districts-are so severe that tax increases in any substantial amount are almost unthinkable. (p. 394)

Consequently, poor urban districts do not have the ability to raise sufficient funding to support a thorough and efficient education for their populations. The court also pointedly linked educational quality with level of resources and decided that poor urban districts suffered lesser educational quality because of a lack of sufficient resources. The court wrote:

> The record supported the conclusion that the quality of education in poor urban districts was significantly inferior compared

> to other school districts within the state, as measured by finances and programs and by student achievement, based on differences in educational opportunities in many areas including exposure to computers, science education, foreign language programs, art and music programs, physical education and physical facilities. (p. 360)

What is truly remarkable about the New Jersey decision is the extent to which the court was willing to enter into the world of professional education in establishing a rationale for its decision. The court gave a strong explanation for why poor urban students needed not merely an adequate education but one that was different from and went beyond traditional education and even the education provided in the wealthier suburbs. The court made the following argument:

> This record shows that the educational needs of students in poorer urban districts vastly exceed those of others, especially those from richer districts. Those needs go beyond educational needs, they include food, clothing and shelter, and extend to lack of close family and community ties and support, and lack of helpful role models. They include the needs that arise from a life led in an environment of violence, poverty, and despair. Urban youth are often isolated from the mainstream of society.... The goal is to motivate them, to wipe out their disadvantage as much as a school district can, and to give them an educational opportunity that will enable them to use their innate ability. (p. 400)

The Court called for "a significantly different approach to education" to help poorer urban schools succeed (p. 401). Such an approach includes more libraries, guidance programs, alternative educational programs, intensive preschool programs, and all-day kindergartens (p. 402). The court proceeded to go even further and state that urban schools needed even more in their programs than suburban schools:

> It is clear to us that in order to achieve the constitutional standard for the student from these poorer urban districts - the ability to function in that society entered by their relatively advantaged peers-the totality of the districts' educational of-

> fering must contain elements over and above those found in the affluent suburban district. (p. 402)

All in all, the New Jersey decision is perhaps the most spirited and far-reaching public policy statement on the unique needs of urban schools. It called for an ambitious, comprehensive, and extended commitment by society for our urban schools.

School District and State Level Policies

An urban principal also needs to understand the ways in which urban school districts are unique and how they are affected by state and national policies. A *multiplicity of federal, state, and local mandates and guidelines* creates a morass of compliance requirements for urban school sites. Excessive regulatory requirements especially follow special programs and services targeted to special-needs students (Wang, Reynolds & Walberg, 1988). Moreover, policies aimed at the segmentation of problems and problem solving lead to an artificial separation of related issues that need to be dealt with systemically (Schorr & Schorr, 1988). All of this occurs in the context of a declining role of the federal government, especially a decrease in financial support for cities and city schools (Hinds & Eckholm, 1990). The declining role of federal government in urban education can be seen in those programs which have traditionally been focused on schools with high levels of poverty. Known as "Chapter 1" programs, they have been, for over 25 years, relatively successful in addressing the educational problems of low-achieving, disadvantaged students (Slavin, 1987). Lytle (1990) reviewed the 1988 reauthorization of federal legislation for Chapter 1 programs (1988). He concluded that the legislation included "a contradictory amalgam of highly prescriptive, top-down policies" (p. 211), providing only limited funding for the cities. Moreover, he observed that the future outlook is that "Chapter 1 will continue to be a program driven by bureaucratic compliance concerns rather than concern for more effective and appropriate instruction for low-achieving, disadvantaged children" (p. 211).

At the same time, there is federal legislation that has significant implications for urban schools, even though it is not focused on education. For example, national immigration policy has substantial implications for the demographics of education in our cities (P. Schmidt,

1990). This is but an example of the important ways federal policy differentially affects urban schools, just as in the past federal transportation and housing policies helped create development outside of cities and encouraged an exodus from our urban centers (Kemp & Cheslow, 1976).

Court decisions at the federal and state levels continue to have enormous influence over urban schools. In addition to the New Jersey funding case (*Abbott v. Burke*, 1990; Newman, 1990) mentioned above, more recent examples include decisions directly affecting the reform of Chicago's school district through the establishment of school-site policy councils (Olson, 1990b), the attempts by the state of Wisconsin to establish plans to permit student/parental choice of schools (Lawton, 1990b), and the reform of the financing systems for public schools in Texas (Harp, 1990). In each of these cases, reforms were instituted that were overturned in part or whole by the courts, with substantial impact on city schools.

At the *school district level*, there are numerous factors at work that a school principal needs to understand. The urban school system, with its many complexities, has been depicted as an impersonal system that presents a maze of roadblocks for the principal (Sarason, 1982), as a corporate conglomerate (Hill, Wise & Shapiro, 1989), and as a bureaucracy dominated by noneducation professionals. Urban school districts are also found to be more and more isolated from the civic, political, and economic mainstream of the cities in which they exist (Hill, Wise & Shapiro, 1989). Yet, the school district can also be a major determining factor for the adoption, implementation, and institutionalization of change at the local level, especially the school site (Fullan, 1985). The locus of policy making at the district level sometimes hinders the exercise of leadership at the school site; yet, the existence of supportive policy frameworks at the school-district level is related to the effectiveness of schools and their ability to effect positive change (Fullan, 1982; Purkey & Smith, 1985).

Currently, urban school districts are the locales of numerous experiments in the restructuring of schools. In Chicago, parents and community members are being given substantial power on locally elected school councils, including the authority to hire and fire principals (Wilkerson, 1989). The school district of Chelsea, Massachusetts, has been taken over by Boston University, which manages the district under a special management contract (Watkins, 1990). In Rochester,

New York, the school district and the teachers union entered into an innovative collective bargaining contract granting the teachers substantial professionalism, which subsequently was contested by the school administrators who protested the apparent loss of administrative authority (Bradley, 1989). In Jersey City, New Jersey, the state declared the school district educationally bankrupt and proceeded to take over the district's operation including the installation of an interim superintendent who has aggressively shaken up the district's administration (Olson, 1990a). Milwaukee took the dramatic step of instituting two schools specifically for African-American males in recognition of the fact that urban schools have traditionally done so poorly with young African Americans (Lawton, 1990a).

One proposed solution for the problems of schools in general and inner-city schools in particular is the development of mechanisms (e.g., vouchers) that would enable parents and students to choose the specific schools they wish to attend. Such mechanisms deregulate the monopoly of the public schools and propose a market system of competition sensitive to the needs of consumers (Chubb & Moe, 1990; 1991). Such proposals have been countered by spirited arguments criticizing the limitations of the market to deliver educational equity (Scovic, 1991; Shanker, 1990). The willingness to experiment so radically with the restructuring of schools is indicative of the risks some reformers are willing to take in the face of the poor performance of our schools, especially in the urban setting.

Throughout all of these reform experiments, there is a debate over the appropriate roles of centralization and decentralization of authority within school districts. (This topic is treated in greater detail in the ensuing chapter 7, "Governing Urban Schools.") The current trend is clearly in the direction of the latter-with emphasis on more authority and accountability at the school site level. In the midst of such a trend, it is useful to keep a historical perspective. Ravitch (1974) reminded us that the centralization/ decentralization debate has been a long-standing one. Referring to the history of New York City, she wrote:

> *Neither centralization nor local control has solved the problems of the school system.* Each has its advantages and disadvantages, which cause a pendulum movement over the years from one form to the other. When school officials have known what they wanted to do and how to do it, then faith in centralization was strong, as in the

> early nineteenth century and in the 1890s. But when both the means and the ends of schooling seem confused and uncertain, and when the political legitimacy of the educational authorities appeared doubtful, there has been a trend to decentralize control of the schools, as in the 1840s and 1960s. (p. 401)

Another perennial debate in urban school districts involves the myriad of issues surrounding school desegregation. Bates (1990) indicated that the public schools are actually experiencing a "resegregation." He argued that early efforts focused on ending physical segregation, what he termed "first generation" activities. What is now needed, he proposed, is attention to "the second-generation issue of within-school segregation and the third-generation issue of the achievement gap between minority students and white students" (p. 11). The necessity of addressing desegregation in its many forms represents one of the biggest challenges to urban school leaders.

One final aspect of urban school districts is noteworthy. The tenure of urban school superintendents averages approximately 2.5 years (Daley, 1990). At the time of this writing, the superintendencies of more than 15 major cities are waiting to be filled permanently. In December 1990, more than one-half of the superintendents of the 45 largest school districts were in their first or second year (Allis, 1990). A real crisis of leadership has emerged as districts have had a difficult time trying to attract and identify talented leaders who are willing to face the stress, problems, and uncertainties of running an urban district. The implications for the principal are readily apparent. As Blank (1987) noted, "school leadership in large urban districts is often a product of co-management or co-leadership by the principal and the superintendent" (p.78). Rapid or frequent turnover in the superintendency removes a vital anchor of stability for the principal, leaving the latter to depend more on her or his own political resources for long-term survival.

Implications for the Urban School Principal

The urban context is a complicated one with numerous forces and relationships-both positive and negative. The interactivist principal is one who is able to anticipate trends and also tries to understand and create the future by regulating continuous interchanges between the school, its context, and a range of possible futures. Such an interactivist approach

involves a broad and diverse knowledge base as well as a fierce commitment to urban school reform, the courage to lead, and a willingness to set specific directions for the school. The other chapters of this book provide a number of solutions to the problems of practice that the urban principal regularly faces. The following are observations and suggestions derived from the foregoing review of the urban context.

Need to Understand Context

Phi Delta Kappa (1980) conducted a systematic review of case studies and research studies of urban schools as well as interviews with several leading researchers and writers on urban education. The focus was on six clusters of variables (leadership, personnel, finance, curriculum and instruction, resources and facilities, and community). One of the key findings was that the behavior of the school leader (especially the principal) was a critical variable and that the leader's *attitude toward urban education* and *expectations for success* within the school were important determinants of the leader's impact on the school (Phi Delta Kappa, 1980, p. 204; see also Clark, Lotto & McCarthy, 1980).

Sarason (1982) viewed the principal from a different perspective. He noted that principals' expectations about the "system" and anticipation of trouble vis-á-vis the system often determined their ability to effect change. Moreover, principals often have a poor knowledge of the system in large urban districts, so they are more likely to adopt a passive stance rather than an active one. This is unfortunate because in Sarason's view "more than any other single position in the American school hierarchy, the principalship represents the pivotal exchange point, the most important point of connection between teachers, students, and parents. . . . and the educational policy-making structure" (p. 180).

The two works cited above are suggestive of a whole body of literature that indicates that principals who understand the system and context in which they work and who have a positive attitude toward urban schools, the potential of students to learn, and their ability to effect change, will be able to make a difference. The effective principal needs to understand the context of the school in order to be able to work within the limitations of those contextual variables that cannot be changed and to manipulate those that can be. Better understanding provokes new ways to appreciate the students and neighborhood served. For example, familiarity with sociological analyses that tie the

formation of an inner-city underclass to the scarcity of jobs and economic exclusion rather than to welfare abuse (Wacquant & Wilson, 1989; Kasarda, 1989) gives a greater appreciation of inner-city poverty.

Students as the Centerpiece

For the interactivist principal, students should be at the center of consideration. The danger is that traditional day-to-day administrative activities distract the principal from the core mission of the school. As Silver (1983) suggested, the administrative profession needs to be reoriented toward student learning outcomes as the principal concern. This reorientation has the following implications.

A successful urban principal needs to have high expectations for the students served. Rather than being labeled *disadvantaged* or *at risk*, urban students should be viewed as "children of worth" (Clayton, 1989). The *at risk* label connotes a cultural deficit model on the side of the student, whereas an alternative view is that schools are not adequately reaching many urban children and may even be too inflexible to accommodate cultural diversity (Cuban, 1989a). The interactivist principal views failure as a deficit of the school, not the student. The urban school principal must be committed to the notion that all children can learn.

The notion of "children of worth" also implies that the principal will be an aggressive advocate on behalf of urban students, constantly "affirming the worth and dignity of the children" (Clayton, 1989, p.135) the school serves. The principal, as a professional, should be concerned first and foremost about the welfare of the school's clients-the students. When that welfare is threatened, the principal needs to act aggressively in the best interests of the client to insure that the educational environment is supportive of children and produces the learning outcomes that are appropriate in the professional's best judgment. Such child advocacy is particularly necessary in the context of an American society that is growing older on average. Children need champions when the political and economic structures more and more favor older populations.

The successful principal needs to view the context of the urban child through the eyes of the child. Kirst, McLaughlin and Massell, (1990) called for a systematic rethinking of the ways in which services for children and youth are designed and implemented. They argued that the school, which historically has separated itself from the social,

economic, governmental, and political subsystems of society, needs to understand the context of childhood from the viewpoint of the child. The school needs to place itself at the hub of the array of social services intended to support the child in need and help to coordinate and integrate them on behalf of the child. Such a posture, they suggested, requires also a rethinking of the role of the principal. The principal, in their view, needs to be a leader in orchestrating and mediating the external forces and services affecting our youngsters in modern society.

Linking with the Urban Context

The principal needs to identify local urban resources with which the school can link to better serve its community. These resources include cultural institutions, universities, businesses, financial institutions, private foundations, churches, and the like, as well as various social service agencies. A catalog of these is an indispensable resource. A principal needs to develop a network of contacts with such organizations and agencies in order to develop broad community support for the school and its goals. The principal must recognize that the urban school is entangled with the broader urban community (Hill, Wise & Shapiro, 1989). Consequently, the principal must constantly look for ways to build bridges between school and community. In the literature, there are some innovative models for doing this.

The successful urban principal should have a healthy distrust of the status quo. The principal needs to be able to disrupt routines and ask basic questions, including "What is going on here?" (Florio-Ruanne, 1988). Simply because something has traditionally been done a certain way is not a justification for its continuance. The good leader constantly examines what others take for granted and looks for ways in which the organization can continuously improve itself. This is a necessary characteristic of a reformer.

The principal must learn the rules of the bureaucratic system to avert obstacles and to recognize the pressure points for certain types of decisions. This means taking charge and aggressively expecting positive results, rather than passively anticipating that some impersonal system will block anything one tries to do (Sarason, 1982).

The principal also needs to build a strong positive relationship with the district superintendent. Successful schools in cities are usually the result of co-leadership or co-management by the principal and the

superintendent (Blank, 1987). This means that the principal and superintendent need to work together as a team, with a line relationship connecting them (Hill, Wise & Shapiro, 1989). The successful principal needs a supportive district.

Activist Orientation

The literature on successful programs time and time again emphasizes that active leadership is a crucial ingredient of success. The principal should take the attitude that she or he can make a difference. As some researchers have observed, "it is well known that administrative leadership, particularly on the part of the building principal, frequently is the crucial characteristic associated with successful inner-city schools" (Levine, Levine & Eubanks, 1987, p.84).

There are several strategies that principals can employ to influence the bureaucratic and cultural linkage of schools in order to improve instruction (Firestone & Wilson, 1985). The literature abounds with prescriptions for action at the school level. For example, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1988) emphasized the need for high expectations and good governance, along with a five-point plan for school reform:

> We suggest that every school give priority to the early years; have a clearly defined curriculum; be flexible in its scheduling arrangements; provide a program of coordinated services; and be a safe, attractive place with good equipment and adequate resources for learning. (p. 17)

Substantive Knowledge

The educational leader needs to have a solid grounding in the substance of the educational enterprise: successful systems of teaching and learning. Consequently, successful principals need to be familiar with literature on urban school reform, with special attention to those factors that they are able to manipulate. The recommended literature includes works on factors associated with success (Phi Delta Kappa, 1980), change processes and strategies in schools and school districts (Fullan, 1982; 1985), the effective schools literature (Purkey & Smith, 1983; 1985), working with at-risk students (McPartland & Slavin, 1990;

Cuban, 1989b; Madden, Slavin, Karweit & Livermon, 1989), and examples of successful programs in urban schools (Council of the Great City Schools, 1987). These and similar works are essential elements of a principal's ready-to-use reference library.

General Knowledge of Context

In addition, the knowledgeable principal also needs to be familiar with some broader works that address the underlying features of the urban scene. Let me list a few examples. Schorr and Schorr (1988) provided a superb overview of the complexity of problems associated with poverty and the arsenal of intervention strategies that are "within our reach" as a society. Fantini and Weinstein (1968) gave us the seminal work on the nature of urban schools, and Gordon (1982) provided one of the best logical analyses of the meaning of urban education. Hodgkinson's works (1988; 1989) contain demographic trends and analyses that are helpful in anticipating the needs of the populations the schools will serve in the years ahead. The 1990 yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education (Mitchell & Cunningham, 1990) explored educational leadership with special attention to the changing context of families, communities, and schools. The January 1989 issue of the *Annals* of the American Academy of Political and Social Science was devoted to social science perspectives on the ghetto underclass. The comprehensive book *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass and Public Policy* (Wilson, 1987) provided an insightful analysis of the structural and human factors contributing to the patterns of inner cities. Each of these works provides the urban principal with a deep appreciation of the workings of the city and the contextual factors impinging on the school and urban inhabitants. The principal who wishes to be a force in the community needs to understand the social, political, sociological, and economic dynamics of the community.

Some Unanswered Questions

Even though we know a great deal about the ingredients of successful programs (Schorr & Schorr, 1988), there are many important unanswered questions. Let me briefly address three interconnected ones and suggest a strategy for addressing them. As Cuban (1989b) pointed

out, we understand many of the separate elements associated with effective schools, yet we do not know the precise order in which to arrange them. Moreover, we do not fully understand the steps necessary to turn a failing school into a successful one. Nor do we have adequate explanations for the relationships between resource levels and successful programs. Undoubtedly, the answers to questions such as these are heavily dependent on the situation. Each school is a unique system within a unique environment, and the dynamic interplay of countless variables is not replicable from one situation to the next.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that we cannot develop a better understanding of such questions. In fact, the urban principal might be the key to building a reliable data base from which to formulate answers. As Silver (1983) described, other professions have had to deal with the issue of generating knowledge about how best to solve concrete problems in real-life, complex situations. She wrote that in many professions,

> each practitioner maintains detailed records in accordance with a standard format to document what she or he did in each case and what the outcomes of that action seem to have been. Case histories, hospital charts, legal briefs, blueprints, and job specifications are examples of such standardized case-by-case records of practice. In the conduct of inquiry within the professions, these records maintained by individual practitioners are an invaluable resource for generating both theoretical and technical knowledge about how concrete problems are solved. (p. 14)

Through systematic record-keeping, reflections on the records kept, and discussion with other professionals who are doing the same thing in their unique circumstances, a principal can both understand better the dynamics of her or his school and make a valuable contribution to the entire education profession and its understanding of schools within their urban context.

Conclusion

By systematic recordkeeping and by familiarity with the literature on successful urban schools and on the ways in which the urban context

affects schools and students, the urban principal can develop a broad knowledge base on the web of relationships between the school and its urban environment. Such a knowledge base empowers the interactivist principal to understand these relationships, seize the opportunities presented by the resources within the urban context, and insulate the school and its students from the negative contextual factors that place students at risk and interfere with learning.

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THE NATIONAL CENTER ON EDUCATION IN THE INNER CITIES

The National Center on Education in the Inner Cities (CEIC) was established on November 1, 1990 by the Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education (CRHDE) in collaboration with the University of Illinois at Chicago and the University of Houston. CEIC is guided by a mission to conduct a program of research and development that seeks to improve the capacity for education in the inner cities.

A major premise of the work of CEIC is that the challenges facing today's children, youth, and families stem from a variety of political and health pressures; their solutions are by nature complex and require long-term programs of study that apply knowledge and expertise from many disciplines and professions. While not forgetting for a moment the risks, complexity, and history of the urban plight, CEIC aims to build on the resilience and "positives" of inner-city life in a program of research and development that takes bold steps to address the question, "What conditions are required to cause massive improvements in the learning and achievement of children and youth in this nation's inner cities?" This question provides the framework for the intersection of various CEIC projects/studies into a coherent program of research and development.

Grounded in theory, research, and practical know-how, the interdisciplinary teams of CEIC researchers engage in studies of exemplary practices as well as primary research that includes longitudinal studies and field-based experiments. CEIC is organized into four programs: three research and development programs and a program for dissemination and utilization. The first research and development program focuses on the *family* as an agent in the education process; the second concentrates on the *school* and factors that foster student resilience and learning success; the third addresses the *community* and its relevance to improving educational outcomes in inner cities. The focus of the *dissemination and utilization* program is not only to increase awareness of the issues CEIC is researching, but, more importantly, to ensure that CEIC's findings are known and used to ensure the educational success of inner-city children, youth, and families.

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